



# Is It Separation Anxiety?

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Symptoms of separation anxiety can be common in dogs recently adopted from shelters. These symptoms may include barking, whining, shaking, urinating, defecating and destructive behavior. Destruction usually happens at the points of exit such as the doors, door jambs, windows, blinds and window sills. Some dogs will exhibit some of these behaviors when left alone and it may not actually be separation anxiety but simply a lack of training. If your dog is experiencing any of these symptoms it is important to address it soon rather than waiting on it to work itself out.

According to animal behavior expert, Patricia B. McConnell, Ph.D., " 'Separation Anxiety' can be caused by a variety of issues, including "over-attachment", frustration intolerance and a true phobia about being alone" (*I'll Be Home Soon! How to Treat Separation Anxiety*, 2000).

Dogs that are not able to be crated due to howling, whining, barking, or digging may be experiencing some crate anxiety. You can find more information about how to work on these behaviors in our [Crate Training](#) article.

For dogs that chew up things in your home, provide them plenty of appropriate toys to chew on in a central location, such as a toy box. Anytime you catch your dog chewing on something they shouldn't trade them for something of a similar texture (plastic items, trade for a plastic toy; wood items, trade for a hard chew toy; couch cushions, trade for a soft toy). If you repeat this technique consistently you will begin to see that your dog will go seek out their toy box to find something to chew on when they get the urge. Avoid scolding your dog for chewing on things that they shouldn't since this will most likely cause the dog to wait until you aren't looking to chew on things rather than accomplishing your intended goal of getting him to stop chewing up your things.

If your dog is having trouble with accidents in the house, you can get more training information in our [Potty Training](#) article. Just like chewing, if you scold your dog for having an accident, instead of the intended result of discouraging pottying in the house, the dog will most likely learn that pottying in front of you is scary. This will result in the dog hiding from you when they need to go potty and it can make it more difficult for your dog to learn to potty outside if you are watching them.

If you think your dog is suffering from true Separation Anxiety speak to your vet or a Certified Separation Anxiety Trainer (CSAT). You can contact a CSAT by visiting <https://malenademartini.com/contact/>.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at [behavior@operationkindness.org](mailto:behavior@operationkindness.org) or visit [www.operationkindness.org/training](http://www.operationkindness.org/training).